THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

August/September 2020 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Defund the Pentagon

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

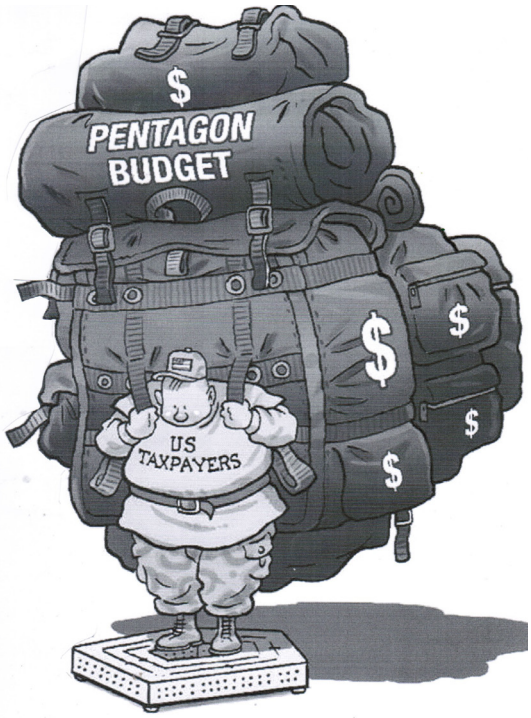
A large army will not keep a king safe,
nor does the hero escape by his great strength;
it is a delusion to rely on the horse for safety,
for all its power, it cannot save.
Psalm 33

"This July 4th, we are not celebrating," declared an email from the anti-war group Code Pink. "We know that no one is free and liberated until all are — and war oppresses." The email went on to note that in order to realize "true liberation" we need to defund the police *and* the military.

The US spends 55% of its discretionary budget on the military, more than the next top seven countries combined. Add together the defense budgets for China, Saudi Arabia, Russia, India, UK, France, and Japan, and the tally still falls well below what our government doles out to the Pentagon each year: Nearly $700 billion in 2018. A record-setting $738 billion in 2020.

That staggering allotment apparently does not satisfy. In February, President Trump proposed a defense budget of $740 billion for fiscal year 2021. There are, after all, foreign bases — nearly 800 around the world — to maintain, a Space Force to design and develop, weapons contractors to satiate. . . . The killing list goes on and on. In a country where war is an open-ended proposition, the line items for the military's budget can be extensive.

And let's not forget the nearly $70 billion needed for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). Originally authorized as an emergency fund for unforeseen needs in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, OCO is now regularly used to pad baseline Pentagon spending, says the California-based organization Peace Action, which describes the account as nothing more than a "slush fund for the Pentagon," notorious for its lack of transparency.



RJ Matson

How will we pay for our staggeringly high defense bill? With staggering cuts, of course. A *New York Times* (2/10/2020) summary of the president's proposed 4.2 trillion dollar budget for 2021 enumerates the reductions: education (8%), diplomacy (21%), housing and urban development (15%) , transportation (13%), environmental protection (26%), and the CDC (16%). In an era when even the

(Continued on Page 2)

Shocking Stats

US Blacks vs Whites

wealth	$95k / $678k
unemployed	17% / 14.2%
uninsured	10% / 5.9%
in prison	16% / 3%
covid 19	50.3 per 100,000 / 20.7

US vs World

military budget	$738 billion / $250 China / $65 Russia
shot by police	31 per 10 million / 11 Germany / 3 UK
in prison	655 per 100,000 / 100 France / 41 Japan
% of income of top 1%	20.2% / 10.8% Greece / 9.3% Spain / 6.2% Netherlands
guns	101 per 100 people / 54.8 Yemen / 30.1 Canada / 24.45 Switzerland
life expectancy	46th 79.11 years old / 32nd Denmark 81.4 / 25th Belgium 82.17 / 6th Italy 84.01 / 1st Hong Kong 85.29

Defund

(Continued from Page 1)

Bill Mauldin

Pentagon recognizes the climate crisis as a global threat, the Trump administration seeks to reduce Environmental Protection Agency funding to 1990's level — $6.7 billion or about ten percent of the military's notorious slush fund.

More than a ledger of income and expense, a budget is a moral document. It reveals what a country values. Judging by the numbers, the US has, for decades, treasured its war-making capacities. Regardless of the political party in power, massive military spending has remained the unexamined assumption in our national budget. Sacrosanct. Untouchable.

Then came a microscopic virus, novel and deadly, and the poverty of our investment was staggeringly exposed. Our beloved homeland, NUMBER ONE! in military spending, ranks first in the world for COVID-19 deaths. We came to realize we cannot bomb our way out of a pandemic.

Change could be coming. This summer, senators Ed Markey, Elizabeth Warren, and Bernie Sanders, who denounced President Trump's 2021 budget as "of, for, and by the 1%," introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would redirect 10% of the Pentagon budget — $74 billion — to poor communities.

Barbara Lee, a Catholic-educated, congresswoman from California is bolder. Move $350 billion from the Pentagon's stash, she says, into diplomacy, environmental protection, and programs that meet the needs of the American people.

A Black single mom on welfare at age 20, Lee got a master's degree in social work at UC Berkeley before serving in the US Congress. She has been an unrelenting critic of our war-making addiction, providing the lone vote, in September 2001, against a resolution authorizing President George W. Bush to use military violence in Afghanistan.

Even with the cumbersome, bureaucratic language, HR 10003, Lee's bill, is an exhilarating read. A people's declaration of independence from the oppressive habit of giving the Pentagon gobs of money, no questions asked:

Whereas, the Pentagon failed its first ever agency wide audit in November 2018,

Whereas, the Pentagon continues to reveal high levels of waste and fraud including awarding a $7,000,000 cloud contract to a 1-person company, losing track of $800,000,000 in construction projects, spending $4,600,000 on crab and lobster in an end-of-the-year spree. . .

Whereas, every hour taxpayers are paying $32,080,000 for total cost of wars since 2001, and these endless wars have not made Americans safer or brought democracy or stability to the Middle East. . . . .

The review of fiscal crimes continues followed by a list of defense budget cuts. On Lee's chopping block is the OCO.

Yet more is required. In addition to defunding the Pentagon, we need to renounce our reliance on violent power. How casually we have used it, flinging our wars and weaponry far and wide oblivious to the havoc caused. Some of that violence has boomeranged. Now combat tactics and the military's excess weaponry infiltrate our police departments, terrorizing poor communities of color.

The police tactic of "no-knock" warrants that killed 26-year-old Breonna Taylor, a Black emergency room technician in Louisville, Kentucky, had its foreign expression in the night, raids conducted by US soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Reading the details of Ms. Taylor's death, I remembered the actions of US marines in the Iraqi city of Haditha. On the hunt for militants, they too barged into the homes of sleeping families and in one, strafed the room where a baby slept.

If COVID-19 revealed the folly of our massive expenditure on violent power, the police killings of our Black brothers and sisters brought home the human consequence of that investment in ways we cannot ignore. War, indeed oppresses us all.

As of this writing, twenty US representatives have signed on to Lee's resolution, well below the number needed to ensure its implementation. Her bold and necessary demand gives me hope, nonetheless. The habits of empire are hard to break, but they can and must be relinquished. Ω

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Founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

Courage to Leap Into Darkness

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

In Stephen King's movie "The Mist," horrifying monsters prowl a dense fog that descends on a town in Maine. A few survivors hunker down in a grocery store which they fortify in an attempt to keep the beasts out. When a mother demands to leave so she can rescue her children, the protagonist. a father, argues that going outside is certain death. The woman goes anyway. After the creatures begin to breach their barricades, the father, his son, and two others escape in a car. Some time later, they run out of gas while their vehicle is butted by abominations, some gigantic, all grotesque. One of the car's occupants has a pistol with three bullets and, after glimpsing one particularly nasty creature, everyone agrees that a shot in the head is more merciful than what the monsters would do to them. The father kills his son. Two others kill themselves, and then, to the father's shock, the fog lifts, a relief column of trucks drives by and he sees the mother with her children on the back of one of them. If the father had only waited three more minutes, his son and companions would have been saved, but how could he know?

The spiritual truth about profound risk-taking is that we never know. Even Jesus sweats blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, because letting himself be crucified seems an excruciating dead end. But, as Christians, we know it was not. Like the mother who braved the mist to save her children, the person who risks everything for others makes space for resurrection.

Long ago, a friend asked if I favored abortion in the case of a desperately poor mother likely to die in childbirth. When I said, "Yes," she replied, "Congratulations, you just aborted Beethoven."

God defies predictability. Biblical characters, who would fail every job interview, get top posts. Moses murdered someone. Paul oversaw the stoning of Saint Stephen. Dorothy Day aborted her first child. But God called them to take a leap of faith into unknown territory without roadmaps or guarantees. Moses delivers the children of Israel to the Promised Land. Saint Paul evangelizes most of the Greek and Roman world. Dorothy Day has another child and co-founds the Catholic Worker. Who would have thunk it?

In truth, God sends grace to accomplish what God wills, but the initial leap of faith is all on us. After a rich man lists his good deeds, Jesus says, "**One more thing you need to do to be perfect: give away all your possessions and come follow me,**" and the man goes away sad. He doesn't comprehend that the seemingly self-destructive proposition is actually an invitation to eternal happiness.

When Christ predicts that he must suffer death, Peter objects and Christ scolds him, "**Get behind me, Satan**." Accepting a cross runs against our grain, defies reason, and seems absurd, but, according to Jesus, it is the primary gate to paradise. "**Unless you take up your cross every day and follow me, you cannot have eternal life**."

When our backs are to the wall, though, texts like "**Love your enemies**," "**Give to those who beg of you**," and "**Whatever you do to the least, you do to me**" seem impossible. How can we love someone threatening to kill us or, worse yet, our children? How can anyone share food, shelter, or even toilet paper, for crying out loud, during a pandemic? How can we be expected to be nonviolent with racism or warfare on our doorsteps? How can we juggle providing for our families, cutting fossil fuels, welcoming migrants, re-imagining the police, and accomplishing countless other urgent needs?

In 1847, at a talk in Boston, when the abolitionist Frederick Douglass expressed despair that peaceful means could end slavery, Sojourner Truth, a former slave and abolitionist too, rose up from the back of the assembly and bellowed, "Frederick, Frederick! Is God dead?"

Now, as we realize that the enormous bloodshed of the Civil War did not banish racial subjugation of Black people in the US, nonviolent anti-racism demonstrators are demanding far deeper change than the mere abolition of slavery. Holding fast to nonviolence after the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others, requires a huge leap of faith, the bearing of a formidably heavy cross.

Biblical scholar, Esau McCaully said it well in a *New York Times* op-ed on June 15, 2020:

"Jesus' profound act of forgiving his opponents provides me with the theological resources to hope. Dare we speak of hope when chants of 'I can't breathe' echo in the streets? Do we risk the criticism commonly levied at Christians that we move too quickly to hope because faith pacifies? Resurrection hope doesn't remove the Christian from the struggle for justice. It empties the state's greatest weapon—the fear of death—of its power."

But make no mistake, when God calls us to hold fast to hard teachings, it's like being invited to leap into a pitch-black, freezing cold abyss with the irrational hope that the Lord of Light will catch us. Community can help, but taking up a cross is more often than not a solitary event. Franz Jägerstätter stood absolutely alone in his opposition to service in Hitler's army. His parish priest and bishop begged him to compromise. Daniel Berrigan wrote during the Vietnam War, "Today, despair is rational," but "hope is a gift" whose "highest expression is in irony." Thankfully, researchers like Erica Chenoweth have shown that victory is much more likely for nonviolent than violent movements. And yet, we still have to take leaps of faith. God help us to do just that whenever they're called for. Ω

Post-COVID — a New Pentecost

by Jim Consedine

Whatever else we've been told about the effects of COVID-19, we've learned that nothing will be the same in the future. . . . Returning to a hopelessly unequal, racist, and unjust world hurtling toward the destruction of the planet is simply not an option. And the challenge applies to the Church as well. An enormous opportunity has presented itself in the evolution of humanity and of our Church.

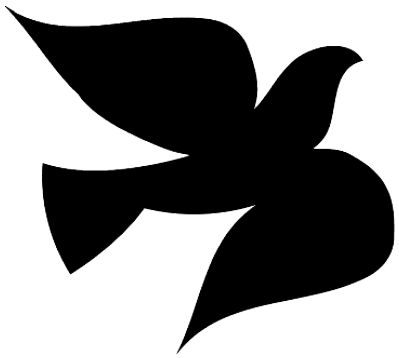
In this modern era, we have not been well-served by new "idols" — corporate capitalism, exorbitant wealth in few hands, power acquisition, success, celebrity culture, widespread consumerism, youth immortality, unbridled and unregulated technological development. Have we too often left behind not just our neighbor but our collective soul? Have we forgotten that we are made of spirit too?. . .

What sort of Church should we hope for when things settle? One thing for sure is there will not be a revival of church attendance to any great extent in the Western world. The model of clericalized Church that most of us grew up with has done its dash. It is over. . . . The facts are staring us in the face. Many don't want to accept them. Pope Francis does. . . . He said at Easter the time was ripe for "new imagination," allowing for "the breath of the Spirit" to open new horizons. Our Church needs to evolve into something different, guided by the Spirit and become more relevant and nourishing.

Because one model dies, that does not mean everything dies. It means that we will have to rebuild a Church that is more relational, more community-based, less hierarchical, more literate, more empowering, more involved with ordinary life, more lay-driven, based on dynamic faith in the light of the Gospels.

That is the vision Vatican II challenged us with more than 50 years ago. That is the model circumstances now dictate we need to further develop for our survival and growth. If we listen carefully to "the signs of the times" and want to survive as a Church with a relevant message, we cannot delay any longer. The old model needs to move over and let the shoots of a new one flower.

We also have to revisit the Vatican II teaching on the Priesthood of the Faithful. And the huge elephant in the room — the continued discrimination against women in ministry. We can no longer continue to fly on one wing. The current model of clericalized priesthood



and the male power structure is well past its use-by date. It is time for a renewal of the priesthood in our Church. We need a Church where priests regardless of gender are builders of community, servants of the Word, nurturers of the needy, presiders at liturgical gatherings, and leaders of local communities.

Our current model of Church was formed in patriarchal times. That formation no longer serves us well. Women deserve equality of opportunity to respond to their vocational callings just as men do. It is a question of God's justice, a power of love which sits at the heart of our Christian faith and empowers our response. We need a Church living the freedom of the Spirit and committed to such development.

At its core, our future Church will be a return to a deeper understanding of and commitment to living the scriptures better. The Beatitudes and the Corporal Works of Mercy (feed the hungry, clothe the naked, etc.) were the "penny-catechism" of the early Church before most people were literate and the Church became clericalized. For the first 300 years, believers were taught and encouraged to live these radical Christian teachings which were central to scripture and basic to their lives as Christians. They learnt them by heart.

In a new post-COVID age, facing a planet under threat as never before because of human action, are we being called to revisit these and other key fundamental texts and apply them to life as the early Christians did? Some of the great thinkers and prophets in our spiritual history started movements through their desire to live these foundational teachings more authentically.

Many religious orders came from such an understanding of Christ's teaching. People saw the need of the poor and responded. . . . Mohandas Gandhi was greatly influenced by them, as were Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day.

I spent part of my lockdown time reading a 600-page book, **Voices from the Catholic Worker**. It contains interviews with hundreds of mainly younger people who came to a committed understanding of the Gospels and the Church through their reflection on the Beatitudes. . . and their desire to practice the Works of Mercy. . . . Most have continued to live a committed Christian faith while remaining part of the Church, raising families, being involved with community development, taking an "option for the poor," practicing hospitality, struggling for more just social structures, active peace-making, and witnessing to Christ in the marketplace.

Another central foundation stone will have to be to enflesh the 2015 vision of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* for a serious involvement to preserve the health of our planet. . . . If we consume at our current levels, we continue to be part of the planet's sinful destruction. Our response as disciples of Christ does not allow for this. . . .

Haven't we been presented with a great opportunity? What is the Holy Spirit asking us today? Ω

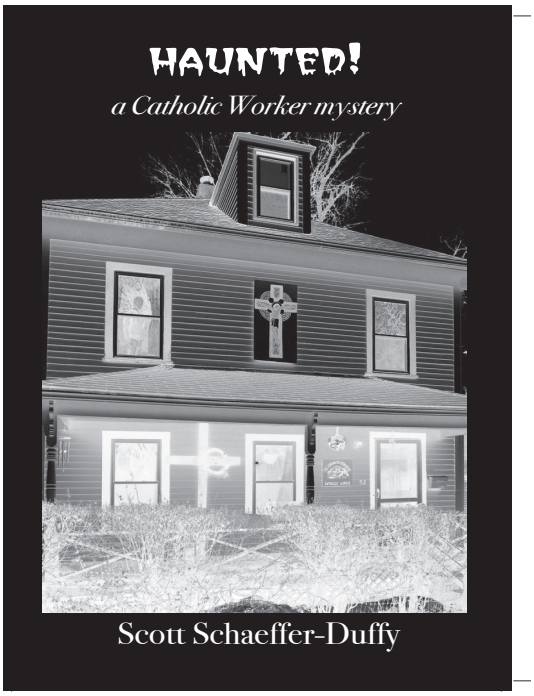
Editor's Note: Fr. Jim Consedine is from New Zealand's Thomas Merton Catholic Worker. The full text is in the Pentecost 2020 issue of The Common Good.

Get Haunted by Racism!

At the publisher's request, Scott Schaeffer-Duffy's book *Haunted* now includes an introduction and postscript relevant to the Black Lives Matter movement. Loaded with Black history focused on national and local champions of racial justice, *Haunted* dispels the notion that racism ended on June 19, 1865 when the Emancipation Proclamation was read to enslaved Blacks, or on July 2, 1964 when the Civil Rights Act came into law, or on November 4, 2008 when Barack Obama became the first Black US president. Frequent lethal attacks by police against unarmed Black people and overwhelming evidence of economic and political inequality between Black and White Americans pushes the urgency to address structural racism.

Selina Gallo-Cruz, a professor of sociology at Worcester's College of the Holy Cross says:

> "*Haunted* takes you at once on a psychological and a sociological journey. In this ghost story of historical detail, readers will contemplate how—unless we can learn to recognize the specter of our own racism—the spirits of those who lived before us may pass damning judgment on the more privileged lives we live in their stead. Through the portals of very real and problematic race records of Worcester, Massachusetts, Schaeffer-Duffy brings back to life questions that once drove our city's vibrant abolition movement: who in our society has no choice but to fear the frightening specter of racial inequality and who, therefore, is not daily haunted by the ongoing and irrepressible legacies of racism?"



If you liked Jordan Peele's creative new genre, the sociological thriller, in his remarkable film "Get Out," you'll love *Haunted*.

***Haunted* retails for $14.95. At this critical time, it is offered for whatever you can afford. Order your copy at: SS Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker, 52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610 or theresecw2@gmail.com.**

Something to Remember

Perchlorate is a waste product from the manufacture of rocket fuel, explosives, and munitions. It dissolves easily into water and cannot be removed by heating or boiling. It causes brain damage in unborn children and infants, dropping their IQ significantly. At least 19 million Americans have perchlorate in their drinking water.

In 2008, the Bush administration pledged to restrict perchlorates, but reversed course. In 2011, the Obama administration ordered the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to adopt maximum limits to perchlorate. In 2019, the Trump EPA issued a proposal to raise the allowance of perchlorate to 56 parts per billion—a level that would be more than ten times higher than most existing state regulatory levels. On June 18, 2020, the EPA dropped all federal limits and oversight of perchlorate.

Erik Olson of the Natural Resources Defense Council advocacy group called the EPA's decision "illegal, unscientific, and unconscionable." The American Academy of Pediatrics called for the "strongest possible" federal limits on perchlorate.

While every governmental action to allow harmful water and air pollution is shocking, this one, to which pregnant women and new parents have no recourse to protect their children, is especially upsetting. The EPA's decision is sure to be challenged in court, but we encourage our readers to add this issue to their list of items which need urgent rectification by future administrations. Ω

Letters

Dear Scott,
I LOVED this issue's "Musings"! I am right there with you, following the lead of younger generations on the environment, issues of identity, advocacy against inequality and for a more just world.

Thank you so very much!

Maria Rodrigues
Brighton, Massachusetts

To Scott & Claire,
Your latest newsletter had just the right tone—not too lachrymose nor too hopeful, but REAL. I especially liked the differing CW responses as it gave a sense of community in both adversity and diversity. Stay safe and well. I am "cocooning" (as the Irish say) alone in Evanston and am well cared-for by my family.

Rosalie Riegle
Evanston, Illinois

Hi, Guys,
How are you guys doing with COVID-19? I think of you and pray for you often. We have been blessed that our Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, acted quickly to implement lockdown. It was a bold move — one that will take a while to see if it will have the desired effect. (Only one death so far, but I suspect we will only know in another week or so if it's truly nipped it in the bud.) She has gone to great lengths to minimize the financial strain on people — even taking a 20% pay cut herself. (Admittedly, she still gets a mind-boggling amount of money!)

Our main concern through this has been our Maori elders and all the knowledge of lore they hold. Sorry. I've worded that poorly. All elderly are our concern. However, added to their selves is all the knowledge they hold that could be lost if they were to contract COVID-19 and die. We can see so many aspects of our culture being lost once we emerge from this COVID cloud.

Closer to home is Charlie's 82-year-old mother. We have included her as being part of our "bubble" and visit her every second day, bringing food and cheer and reminders not to go out shopping. It is so hard for our strong, independent elders, icons in the tribe, to have to stay home and become dependent. She particularly enjoys when we come later in the day and are present for night prayers.

Charlie is supposed to be teaching his students via the internet. It's not really working. The parents send a "like" and that's it!!! So, he's found a bunch of hard-copy work sheets laying around at home (part of his "cleaning up") and is making packs to drop in letter-boxes on our way to his mum's. Where there's a will, there's a way.

Meanwhile, never giving up faith in seeds' potential for life, I've still been working on the garden. The birds and slugs keep eating the seeds and seedlings, so it's hard getting a winter garden established so late. However, the Maori greens are tougher than the European ones — so, yay. Things are finally looking hopeful.

Stay strong — Stay safe — Stay in tune with God.

Sheri Waata
Whirinaki, New Zealand

Editor's Note: By July 15, twenty-two people died of COVID-19 in New Zealand, 4 deaths per million. New cases have all but ended, and the country safely re-opened. By July 15, 140,140 Americans died of the virus, 423 deaths per million.

Dear Goodman Scott & Goodwoman Claire,
I read of the awful incident of the 75 -year-old gentleman [Martin Gugino] who had been knocked over [by a police officer at a Buffalo, New York Black Lives Matter protest] and left in the street. As a 76-year-old man in fairly good shape, I could only imagine how that must be. What I did not know was that Stephen Colbert mentioned that Gugino was a Catholic Worker. Like Senator Romney, I will not dignify President Trump's comment-tweet on the incident. The sadness I feel for this nation seems to get greater. I do know there are good people—indeed—heroes and heroines who restore my faith in our human family.

I had promised a small gift to you when my stimulus check came in and in honor of the brave Mr. Gugino will give a bit more now.

Phil Brewer
Rutland, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: Among the many heroes and heroines is Patrick Hutchinson, a Black Lives Matter protester in London who hoisted a beaten counter-demonstrator onto his shoulders and carried him to safety. Hutchinson's friends shielded them from additional blows. Asked afterwards why he helped a skinhead, Hutchinson said: "I was just thinking of a human being on the floor. It wasn't going to end well had we not intervened. We did what we had to do. We stopped somebody from being killed.... If the other three police officers that were standing around when George Floyd was murdered had thought about intervening, and stopping their colleague from doing what he was doing, like what we did, George Floyd would be alive today still."

Dear Scott & Claire,
I hope you are staying well in this world. Will it return to the old after the virus or will we have learned from this time and go on to a better relationship with nature and each other?

Mary Ann Phillips
Southbridge, Massachusetts

Dear Friends,
The past few months have been disturbing, challenging, and encouraging. We are simultaneously dealing with the COVID-19 virus and increasing awareness of our country's racist history and ongoing systemic racism. Cell phones and social media have shined a powerful light upon police violence directed against people of color.

Donald Trump's election emboldened

racist actions but it also encouraged many White people to educate themselves about colonialism, racism, white supremacy and privilege. A discussion about restructuring the police is now taking place.

Trump is a master at dividing people and confusing issues. It is tempting to list our complaints about the Trump administration. However, the crises facing the US today cannot be solved by simply putting Democrats in the White House.

Too many people are feeling hopeless and beginning to believe that voting will not help. That even if Trump should lose the election, he will not concede defeat and leave. Thirty million people have lost their jobs. An entire generation is being told that the gig economy is their only option. The pandemic exposed the faults of a for-profit health care system. But we have not yet seen the full economic consequences of this pandemic. It will get worse, probably much worse.

We cannot be immobilized by fear. We must take the time to dream. To imagine a world where people's needs and the environment are valued more than money. We encourage our friends not to give up hope for a world in which all people have social and economic justice, for a democracy where every adult has an automatic right to vote, where corporations and billionaires cannot make unlimited financial contributions to bought-off politicians.

Social change happens when things get really lousy. We have the possibility of making needed pivotal change. It is not time to be silent. Not all of us are able to join demonstrations, but everyone can do something. Talk to your neighbors. Expect that you will not agree on everything. Listen. Ask questions. Find common ground. Write letters to elected representatives and newspapers. Connect with local groups. Get active in unions.

Changing the occupant of the White House and putting more Democrats into Congress is a necessary first step, but effective change starts from the bottom. Make noise. Follow up. Do not hesitate to get involved. If we stop reaching for justice, we lose it. History is being made every day. What is your role?

Phil Stone & Katie Green
Dunedin, Florida

Allegorical Oracle 5/5/20

by Michael Caldwell

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you that have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Isaiah 55.1

Oh where, Voice of the Wind, is leadership for We the People?
And where is the system
that gives millions of unclaimed Idaho potatoes to hungry Chicagoans,
that signs an executive order, directs trucks to pick up and deliver?

Where is the leadership and where is the system
that collects unmarketable milk before it is dumped in manure pits
and delivers it to the one in seven food-insecure children
in the richest nation in history?

Where is the leadership and where is the system
that puts We the People money into the salvation of the U. S. Postal Service,
panned as "a joke" by the leader but needed desperately for democracy
for voting safely, remotely, in time of historic pandemic,
that puts the money wasted in twelve hundred dollar checks
to half the people, like me, who don't need it,
into saving the post office?

Where is the leadership and where is the system
that doesn't require voters and election officials to risk their lives to vote
like Wisconsin in April's sham primary?

Where is the leadership and where is the system
that pays some EMTs—who have no health insurance—
who risk their lives as first responders
more than thirty seven thousand dollars a year in total full-time salary in rich New York?

Where is the leadership and where is the system
that nonviolently and vigorously rejects the National Defense Authorization Act of 2020,
that increases rather than decreases nuclear weapons production
in an already grotesquely morbidly obese Defense Department budget,
that puts it on a diet, to redirect urgently needed funds to education and health?

With Isaiah, Republican President General Dwight Eisenhower said sixty years ago:
Every warship launched, every rocket fired, takes food from the mouths of the hungry.

With Yeshua of Nazareth, Pope John XXIII said in the sixties:
Why should the resources of human genius and the riches of the people turn more often to preparing arms than to increasing the welfare of all classes of citizens and the poor? Ω

Catholic Worker Calendar

August 12, 26, September 9, 23—Evening Prayer: Weather permitting, join us at evening prayer and Taize chant in our backyard with suitably-distanced chairs and face masks. 6:30 P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

Mason Street Musings

Like many Americans on COVID lockdown, we too planted with a vengeance last spring. Our squatter's lot is now an explosion of lush and tangled green. Craters of broccoli, kale, and collard. Eruptions of basil.

The oregano bush, a piteous cluster of brittle twigs that I took for dead last winter, has leapt its box to march on mint and asters. The green beans seeded on opposite sides of a fence have crested their barrier to entwine in each other's seductive tendrils.

The garden is a lot like my life, crowded and unruly. We do not have manicured crops, but a horde of rambunctious vegetation always clamoring for weeding, pruning, and watering.

"Too much work," I think. Then sometimes, usually in the evening when the leaves have lost their noonday droop and stretch expectantly for the coming moonlight, I will stop to marvel at the mystique of an eggplant or the grandiosity of a zucchini and wonder how growth happens. What is the molecule-upon-molecule process that transforms a tiny puckered ball, musty yellow, into a flowering vine where white blossoms become sweet peas?

The German mystic and visionary Hildegard of Bingen called it viriditas, the greening power of God.

Our neighbor Joel Betts, who works for the Worcester County Conservation

District, is helping with the garden this year. My nephew Jesse Kenworthy and former seminarian Brian Ashmankas also assist. Both are here for the summer to experience Catholic Worker life. "It's mostly chopping vegetables," I warned.

Scott and I are glad for Jesse's and Brian's presence, and the sense of community that they bring.

Early this month, Joel and his fiancée Laura drove out to Michigan for a two-week vacation. He felt conflicted about leaving the garden during a time of voracious growth and phoned one Sunday to see how the plants were faring. Had I harvested any of the red flowering beans? How about the zucchini? One was already four inches long before he left, so he wondered.

The day Joel called, the number of new COVID cases in Florida climbed to 15,000. The news reported on the death of a young Texan, a man in his thirties. Believing the disease to be a hoax, he attended a "COVID-19 party" then later died. "I think I made a mistake," he said.

In such times, we are desperate to know of life, to hear details of its reliable fecundity. Maybe that is why Joel phoned me from half way across the country for a garden update.

The backyard has become our open-air living room where we host visitors. Everyone masked, of course. Our former guest A. who eats with us twice a week takes his supper on the bench overlooking the garden. Communal Evening Prayer is said in a circle of folding chairs arranged on a bumpy patch of grass.

Animated conversation invariably follows the liturgy — a movie review, an update on Teresa's ailing mother, or a rant about th*e idiocy* of our current administration.

It was during one of these heated talks that Fred quietly asked if anyone could recommend a book on African American history. He had just watched a documentary on the 1920 Tulsa race riots and wanted to know more. Eighty-seven years old and Irish American to the core, Fred wondered why he was never told about the decimation of Tulsa's Greenwood neighborhood, also known as the Black Wall Street. The event and its omission from history books had him re-thinking what it means to be American.

I later marveled at Fred's curiosity still vibrant in his ninth decade, his instant willingness to re-arrange worldview to include the overlooked. Now there's growth, the greening of conscience and heart. Blessed Summer! **Claire**

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